

December 31, 2008

My Fellow Memphians:

The year 2008 was truly momentous for the Memphis City Council. We are ending the year with ten new Councilmembers and we are constantly reminded that "It's a New Day at City Hall."

This new attitude of governance was demonstrated when Mayor Herenton presented his 2009 budget to the council which proposed a \$0.58 property tax increase and the closure of five libraries and four community centers. After careful deliberation, the council approved an operating budget that kept the libraries and community centers open, DECREASED the city property tax rate by \$0.17 and ceased funding traditionally provided by the city to the Memphis City Schools, a controversial decision that is currently in litigation.

The Council's in-depth review of the Board of Education's budget occurred due to the many examples of mismanagement that have been publicly discussed. Our new Superintendent, Dr. Kriner Cash, and his staff appear to be correcting the deficiencies at Memphis City Schools and have the school system on the right track.

As with all large cities, crime is a major concern in Memphis and Councilmembers made great efforts to get more police on our streets. According to statistics, crime is on the decline in Memphis; however this is little comfort to victims. Police officer residency was discussed all throughout 2008 and a task force of the brightest human resources professionals in Memphis convened to advise the council of ways to solve MPD's hiring challenges. Police hiring study continues under a council ad hoc committee formed to make additional recommendations to the full council next month.

Despite the challenges we face, Memphis is moving ahead. We are fortunate to be experiencing growth and development in the city including the Fairgrounds, Bass Pro Shop and major new retail planned for Midtown and East Memphis. We are making progress eliminating blight and providing quality housing for all income levels.

I am truly privileged to see the next generation of legislators lead us into the future on the local level and in the highest office in the land. I am confident that together there is nothing we cannot achieve. Thanks for being there with me. I am optimistic that 2009 will be a great year. Let's Celebrate Memphis!

Very Truly Yours,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Myron", written in a cursive, flowing style.

Myron Lowery